

VZCZCXRO0265
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHBW #1381/01 2421605
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 301605Z AUG 06 ZDS
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9251
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/USNMR SHAPE BE IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1185
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RXFEAA/HQ AFSOUTH NAPLES IT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BELGRADE 001381

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D COPY- ADDRESSEE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/29/2006
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SR](#) [YI](#) [MW](#)
SUBJECT: SERBIA: PM KOSTUNICA NOT LETTING UP ON KOSOVO

BELGRADE 00001381 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHAEL C. POLT PER REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador met with PM Kostunica on August 29 to review priority issues after the Serbian government,s August recess. He acknowledged the PM,s recent personal address to the nation on Mladic (and several other positive developments) but pressed Kostunica to explicitly call for Mladic,s arrest and to be much more visibly involved in the effort. The Ambassador strongly urged the PM to defuse the ongoing controversy over Ahtisaari,s alleged remarks (septel) and asked about Kostunica,s earlier assurances that there would be no GoS support for partition, noting U.S./IC determination to act decisively in response to provocations on the ground. Kostunica reaffirmed his opposition to partition but reiterated his continued determination to fight an independence outcome both at home (via political and legal means) and in Serbia,s ongoing diplomatic efforts. End Summary

¶2. (U) PM Kostunica met with Ambassador Polt on August 29, in his private office for a discussion of several priority issues. Kostunica mfa advisor Protic and Embassy polcouns also attended.

Some Progress but(

¶3. (C) The Ambassador noted several positive recent developments including progress in our negotiations on a new embassy site, and the announcement of indictments in the investigation of the murder of the amcit Bytyqi brothers, and congratulated the PM on the successful sale of the Mobtel cellular telephone company to a Norwegian company. Kostunica expressed his satisfaction with the outcome of the sale on many levels: in dollar terms, in terms of clarifying ownership, and with respect to strengthening ties with a European country with which Serbia enjoyed close political and cultural links.

More Needed on ICTY

¶4. (C) The Ambassador also acknowledged Kostunica,s recent public comments(August 25) on the heightened effort to locate and transfer ICTY indictee Mladic. While it was certainly a

step in the right direction, he urged Kostunica to call explicitly for Mladic,s arrest and to consider other ways to visibly engage in the heightened effort. The Ambassador shared the U.S.-produced wanted poster for Mladic,s arrest and asked Kostunica to consider having it posted at Ministry of Interior (MUP) installations around Serbia. The PM downplayed the importance of using the &arrest8 word) he claimed he had used it (indirectly) and would look to specifically saying it &at the next opportunity.8 As for the wanted posters, he expressed skepticism (as he has countless times in the past) that it would send the right message, but he promised to take it under consideration. The important thing, said Kostunica, was that the public had begun to understand that one man could not hold the country hostage.

Ambassador: Stop Attacking Ahtisaari

¶5. (C) The Ambassador lamented the recent grenade attack in Northern Mitrovica, among other incidents, noting full U.S. support for bringing the perpetrators to justice. Kostunica said the attack was just the latest in a series of attacks against Serbs, and doubted that the investigation would yield any results, observing that even in the few cases where arrests had been made (for attacks against Serbs), the culprits were always released for lack of evidence. The Ambassador noted the unhelpfulness of some of the public statements linking the attack to Ahtisaari and his team and urged Kostunica to defuse the issue related to his alleged remarks about collective guilt. Ahtisaari retained the full confidence of the international community and it was counterproductive for Serbia to attack his credibility, particularly during a trip to Kosovo where he was pressing on Serb priorities.

Kostunica on Ahtisaari

BELGRADE 00001381 002.2 OF 002

¶6. (C) Kostunica acknowledged the need to deal with Ahtisaari given his central role in the status process, but lamented the lack of personal engagement. "We were told that there would be an aggressive schedule for talks in August but there was no follow up after meetings on the 7th and 8th. Where was the big push?" It was particularly bothersome, observed Kostunica, that instead of seeking to clarify his remarks quickly and quietly, Ahtisaari had ignored Belgrade,s official complaint and then responded publicly in a way that complicated the situation in Serbia even more. &He only answers to himself,8 said Kostunica, contrasting the lack of communication with Ahtisaari to his difficult but personal and direct relationship with EU High Rep Solana. In any case, Kostunica said he was not surprised at Ahtisaari's attitude, since he had pre-judged Kosovo independence from the onset. The Ambassador noted that Ahtisaari,s comments about &collective responsibility8 (as opposed to guilt) were neither dramatic nor inappropriate and urged the PM to drop the issue.

----- --
Kosovo) Oppose Partition but PM Not Giving Up on Outcome
----- --

¶7. (C) The Ambassador raised two important concerns that had a bearing on the outcome of the Kosovo talks and the likely reaction to independence. He recalled Kostunica,s earlier assurances that he would not support partition in any way, and noted U.S. resolve, shared by others in the Contact Group, to ensure against any post-settlement violence. Would the GoS work closely with us at all levels to ensure there were no problems? Kostunica said that while Serbia strictly respected the CG principles on the status talks, there would be no change in Serbia,s opposition to an independence outcome. The PM said he continued to doubt that independence would be the outcome) there were too many complications.

Kosovo was part of Serbia and would be recognized as such in the constitution; partition made no sense. As for possible violence, there had been no attacks (in the UNMIK era) by Serbs against Albanians) only Serbs had suffered. Of course, he was committed to guarding against such violence.

Not Promising on CHOD) SOFA Maybe

18. (C) Ambassador Polt urged Kostunica to support quick resolution of military command issues, including the appointment of General Ponos as Chief of Staff. Kostunica assured the Ambassador that he fully accepted President Tadic's constitutional authority as civilian Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The Ambassador added that it was crucial that Serbia reassure on civilian and military unity of command. Kostunica agreed, but noted the need for a new law to confirm procedures and processes before moving to personalities.⁸ It was strange, he observed, that the U.S. seemed to know more about Ponos than he did. He had never met him personally and knew little about his military preparation. In response to the Ambassador's request to quickly approve the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), Kostunica said it would be taken up in the Government's session on Thursday, August 31. (Kostunica did not explicitly say that it would be approved.)

Comment

19. (C) Kostunica appeared rested and relaxed. He was not combative on Kosovo or the Mladic effort. But clearly he has no intention of relaxing Serbia's strong opposition to an independence outcome in the Kosovo status talks, suggesting even that he is ready for the endgame (the fight with Ahtisaari is not encouraging in that regard). On the ICTY front he has taken a few more steps, but as always has stopped short of really committing all his political power. He can do much more. Kostunica met with Tadic the evening of 8/28 on the package of priority issues but he offered no details during our discussion. We will seek a read-out from Tadic in the coming days but it does not appear that they agreed to a quick fix on the pending legislative package required to formalize the transition from State Union to Republic of Serbia. We are not optimistic that Ponos will be appointed Chief of Staff before Tadic's trip to the U..; we are more encouraged, however, on approval of the SOFA at the government's 8/31 meeting. En Comment
MOORE